



U.S. Department of Justice

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EVENT: Sentencing

Defendant: Salah Rashem et al

SENTENCE IN U. S. / CANADIAN ALIEN SMUGGLING PROSECUTION

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced that Roko Berisic, 32, of Shelby Township, Michigan was sentenced today in federal court in Detroit to 12 months imprisonment for Conspiracy to Smuggle Illegal Aliens into the United States and to Harbor and Transport Illegal Aliens Within the United States. The sentence was handed down by United States District Judge Paul D. Borman.

Berisic was charged with seventeen other defendants originally unsealed on February 14, 2006 simultaneously with a joint U.S./Canadian take down of the alien smuggling organization. Berisic pleaded guilty to the conspiracy on September 6, 2006. Ten other co-conspirators were previously convicted and sentenced in the United States:

Duke Lumaj, 34, of West Bloomfield, Michigan
Kathleen Voneitzen, 49, of Vicksburg, Michigan
Han Huang, 44, of Albion, Michigan
Nosh Gojcaj, 35, of Macomb, Michigan

Hoa Ly, 43, of Macomb, Michigan
Bianca Gagliano, 25, of Windsor, Ontario
Dod Martini, 41, of Macomb, Michigan
Gui Liang Lin, 45, of Toronto, Ontario
Melanie Franquist, 26, of Wallaceburg, Ontario
Salah Rashem, 45, of Rockford, Illinois

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Also charged in the Indictment, but not yet apprehended by U.S. authorities, are: Maitham Aziz Alzehrani, 34, of Windsor, Ontario; Kola Bajraktari, 34, of Windsor, Ontario; Fran Gashaj, 40, of Windsor, Ontario; Zef Shpati, 40, of Windsor, Ontario; Kai Zheng You, 40, of Toronto, Ontario; Duke Bracaj, 36, of Windsor, Ontario. Colin Price, 40, of Windsor, Ontario jumped bond and fled the country after being arraigned in the United States. The Canadian-based defendants will first answer related Canadian charges before facing possible extradition to the United States.

The charges were based upon the interdiction of at least 78 illegal aliens smuggled into the United States by the organization and the more than 2,000 incriminating telephone conversations, in four different languages, intercepted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) during the latter part of 2005. Investigators estimate that the conspiracy was responsible for approximately 75% of all aliens smuggled into the State of Michigan from Ontario, Canada during the past several years, certainly numbering in the hundreds. Alien smuggling into Michigan from Ontario has slowed significantly since the joint U.S./Canada take down on February 14, 2006. This and other organizations like it posed, and continue to pose, a threat to the national security of both the United States and Canada given the willingness to smuggle anyone across international borders for a price.

"Today's sentence highlights the fact that human trafficking is one of the worst criminal acts that one person can commit against another. Those who smuggle human beings across international borders for profit engage in dehumanizing acts of criminality. Anyone who wants to make money by smuggling human beings in deplorable conditions must realize that they will

be met with a united international front of law enforcement agencies dedicated to stopping them and putting them in jail. Moreover, the sentence imposed today provides yet another fine example of effective joint U.S. and Canadian criminal enforcement that serves as a warning to all human traffickers: smuggle human beings for profit and you will do a significant amount of hard time." said United States Attorney Murphy.

"Alien smuggling organizations are driven by greed with little regard to the health, well being, dignity, or motivation of their human cargo," said Brian M. Moskowitz, Special Agent in Charge, of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Detroit. "Attacking and dismantling these criminal groups is critical to securing our borders and ensuring compliance with our immigration and customs laws. Smugglers should understand that we will not tolerate nor allow the U.S. Canada border to be used as an opportunity for them to profit from their crimes - rather we will use our shared border as an opportunity for our nations to work together to bring them justice."

In announcing the sentences, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy commended the work of the Special Agents of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Border Patrol, and the RCMP which conducted the investigation. Members of the Integrated Border Enforcement Team (IBET) were also involved in coordinating this transnational effort. The prosecution was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Kenneth R. Chadwell, the U.S. Attorney's Office Anti-Terrorism Immigration Coordinator.